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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS AT CAMP LEJEUNE WHILE VISITING SENIOR ENLISTED FORCES
CAMP LEJEUNE, NC
DECEMBER 20, 1994

Secretary Perry: Thank you very much, Sergeant Major Overstreet.

I'm down here as one of my quarterly visits to bases with the senior enlisted of the military forces. Today Sergeant Major Overstreet, senior enlisted of the Marines, is sponsoring this visit. Earlier I have been to an Army base sponsored by Sergeant Major Kidd of the Army, and in turn will go to the Air Force, the Navy -- I've already been to the Navy, I might mention, and the Coast Guard.

I am proud of the capability that I've seen displayed by the Marines here today. There isn't another country in the world that has the military capability represented by the United States Marines. The ability to project power over the beach, in particular. This capability is represented by the fine training that is done at this camp. These Marines do the training here at Camp Lejeune, and then they deploy overseas. Some of the units in this division, as we speak, a Marine Expeditionary Unit, is deployed off of Bosnia. So the Marines alternate between training here at Camp Lejeune, to get in fine condition for their missions, and then go on deployments.

This Marine Corps today is the finest Marine Corps at any time in its history, in my opinion. Peak capabilities, peak training, very high morale. One of my reasons for coming to these bases is not only to see the training in action, but to have a chance to talk to the Marines here and get a feeling for the morale and the spirit. I can tell you it is very high. That's a result of leadership.

I see the leadership on a day-to-day basis, meeting with General Mundy, the other leadership and top Marines, Sergeant Major Overstreet. But leadership is not just at the top. It goes right down to the NCOs. You come out here to Camp

Lejeune and you see the quality and the spirit of the NCOs here, and you get some real feeling of the leadership in the Marines and why the spirit and the capability is as high as it is.

I am prepared to take some questions from you.

Q: Mr. Secretary, you've seen quite a bit this morning. What have you been hearing?

A: I've been, first of all, hearing about... They've been describing to me how they conduct amphibious operations, step-by-step, function-by-function, and they've described it in very great detail. You get the very clear impression that the specialists in these operations really know what they're doing. And I also take some time out to ask questions, to try to get some feeling for the spirit and the capability of the people here. As I said, the impression I get is very, very strong in terms of both capability and spirit.

Q: What are your thoughts on President Carter's efforts in Bosnia?

A: Bosnia has been a very difficult problem. The war has been going on there for more than two years now. It's affected many hundreds of thousands of people -- killed, casualties or refugees. It has so far defied all attempts at trying to get a peace agreement or even an enforceable cease-fire. The problem has seemed intractable because the different sides are unwilling to come to an agreement, and both sides felt they could apparently get more by fighting than they could by reaching an agreement.

President Carter seems to have an agreement at this stage. He has an agreement with the Serbs about which there seems to be some confusion about the details of the agreement. I understand he's gone back to [inaudible] today to try to get that clarified. He has reported an agreement with the Bosnian government in terms that they would accept a four-month cease-fire, and they reaffirmed again their support of the contract group's peace plan.

I think it's premature to say that this peace mission has been successful and indeed, it has not been completed yet, but I'm hopeful at this point. I think he has made good progress to this point.

Q: Are you confident that the Lejeune Marines who are off Bosnia will stay on the ships and not have to go ashore? And if they did have to go ashore at some point, are you confident that they would be involved in a rescue operation as originally described, and not a protracted sort of engagement?

A: The Marines from Camp Lejeune that are this Marine Expeditionary Unit off Bosnia are there for a rescue operation. We have continued to conduct air operations over Bosnia. The Serbs have in place over the last few months a number of air defense systems. So there is a possibility that an airplane might get shot

down. So one of the primary requirements of that MEU is to be there on the spot in case a rescue operation is necessary.

During the last few weeks there has been some talk about a withdrawal of the UN forces, the UNPROFOR forces. President Clinton has agreed in principle that if the United States is asked to participate in a NATO cover for that withdrawal, that we would fully participate in that operation. If that were to happen, let me say first of all, that we don't believe that a withdrawal of UNPROFOR is desirable, and at the present time we don't believe that it's necessary. But if it were to happen and if NATO were to undertake the responsibility of providing a cover for that withdrawal, the United States would participate. But that would require more troops than the 2,000 Marines that are in that Marine Expeditionary Unit. That's not a sufficiently large force. Marines are very, very capable, but 2,000 of them are not enough to provide the cover that would be needed there. We're talking about a substantially larger force than that.

Whether or not the Marines would participate in that larger force would depend on the timing, when that would actually occur.

Q: What are you doing about the situation in North Korea? [inaudible]

A: We had a meeting today in Panmunjom precisely for the purpose of securing the release of Warrant Officer Hall. The report that I've gotten from that meeting was that no substantial progress was made. That's not a satisfactory answer, as far as I'm concerned. We consider that of primary importance, I personally consider it of primary importance, that Warrant Officer Hall is released immediately. We are pursuing that through a variety of diplomatic sources, some of which I am not free to discuss. But I can assure you that we're pursuing this with every source available to us. President Clinton is pursuing it, Secretary Christopher is pursuing it. I am pursuing it. This is the first priority effort we have right now to take every action we can to secure the release of Warrant Officer Hall and the remains of the other pilots.

Q: Are we going to withhold the billions of dollars of aid that we're going to send to North Korea? [inaudible] if they don't send [inaudible]?

A: We're not making any linkage to that at this point. We're saying we want Warrant Officer Hall's release. It has nothing to do with that agreement. It's simply the right think for North Korea to do, and we're going to insist that they do the right thing.

Thank you.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS LAWSON OF THE NAVY TIMES NEWSPAPER
CAMP LEJEUNE, NC
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Q: I really got a kick out of the enlisted (inaudible) here.

A: We shook hands with generals when we got off the plane and shook hands when we went on the plane, and that's the last we saw of them. This whole operation was done by the enlisted.

Q: Is this unique to have the enlisted service chiefs report to you in a formal or informal panel? Is this unique, and what's it do for you?

A: I don't know whether previous Secretaries have done anything like this. I'm not aware of it. I don't think so. But the first week I was Secretary I started meeting with these senior enlisted. First of all in the Pentagon, then I went on a trip and asked them to come along with me. I don't remember whether they proposed it to me or I proposed it to them, why don't we schedule regularly quarterly trips and rotate that among each service as a host. Sergeant Major Kidd hosted a trip down to Fort Benning, then we went down to Norfolk with Chief Petty Officer (inaudible), and now we had this trip down to Camp Lejeune. I think the next one is going to be the Air Force, then we're going on a Coast Guard trip. I haven't talked about that yet, but I'd like to invite Secretary Pena to come along on that trip also. We'll make that double duty for you. All three of the ones we've been on so far have been like this one, in that everything down there is managed by the sergeant major. We hardly see an officer when we go down there.

Q: And that's by design.

A: That's by design. That's by not only their design but my design too. That's the way I want it done.

A2: The theory behind that is this. I don't mean to jump into the Secretary's interview here, but it's something that I heard from one of his sergeant majors over in Europe. Gene McKinny, I believe is his name. Sergeant Major McKinny said you don't wash a rental car. Think about that. How many rental cars you've ever drove that you washed. If we, as enlisted people, regardless of our service, don't believe that belongs to us and we have a vested interest, you don't take care of it. So this gives us an opportunity to show that we do have enlisted folks out there that have a vested interest. We're not driving a rental car. The car we're driving belongs to us and we can affect it.

A: I sit down every day and read reports about the state of the forces. The readiness reports, and we get C-1 ratings and C-2 ratings, facts and statistics like this. They give you some feeling for what's going on. But the real feeling is getting out and talking with the people. Readiness is a lot of components, but one thing it is is training. You saw the training that the people down there at Camp Lejeune were doing today. Another component of it is the spirit and the morale of the people. You can't get that out of a report.

I believe I can sense that by going out and meeting and talking to people. You probably got a feeling for that also.

Another one is the state of the equipment, how well people understand the equipment. These were not specially selected actors they brought forward to describe the equipment. They were just the people who operate the equipment. It wasn't just that they went through their little speeches. I stopped about every third one to ask them a few questions. They knew the answers. They knew their equipment.

You get a feeling for that. When I was in industry I used to call this management by walking around. You go out and talk to people and find out what in the hell is going on, which you cannot get from reading reports. The way to do that is with these senior enlisted because they know, they organize the whole thing, they get the sergeant majors at these bases we're going to set it up.

On top of all of that, aside from all of the (inaudible), it's a hell of a lot of fun for me. This is the best day of the quarter for me.

Q: A lot of the Marines this morning said they were up at 3:00 o'clock this morning getting out there to get all the gear out there and put the show on for you, but a lot of them got a real sense of satisfaction out of being able to show you what they do. When you're sitting there in Washington does coming out here and talking

to these corporals who run these osmosis machines, do you think about that when you actually employ those forces?

A: I come out primarily for the benefit that I get (inaudible), but I believe and I hope that it's some benefit to the troops out there too, in seeing that their senior enlisted personnel and their leadership in the Pentagon cares about and knows about what they're doing.

A2: When the Marines see that their sergeant major has direct access to the Secretary of Defense and it's not something that's on paper to satisfy some requirement, the word spreads throughout the force. (Inaudible) Norfolk, Inchon, (inaudible). The sergeant major at Fort Benning.

A: There's a programmatic feedback in all of this, too. The quality of life initiative which I introduced a few months ago, that came from the first meeting we went out to. When I talked with each of these senior enlisted, I started to get a feeling for what the issues were, went out in the field. The first two times they went there they arranged breakfast with a collective group of NCOs in that area. The first five minutes of the conversation was pretty formal. After that it started opening up. They started telling me what was bugging them. It came to quality of life issues. These are the people we depend on to lead our Army and to lead our Marines and lead our Navy and Air Force. That they had these profound concerns about the problem was a message which I needed to be hearing. That was translated directly into the quality of life initiative, and my sensing that this was one of the most important things we could do to maintain over the long term the readiness of the force.

Q: Thank you.

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REMARKS QUOTED IN ARTICLE WHILE VISITING MARINE CORPS
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Perry has 'hell of a lot of fun'

Defense chief sees enlisteds as heart of Corps

By Chris Lawson
Times staff writer

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Defense Secretary William Perry got out of the Pentagon and into the Marine Corps Dec. 20, and he did it in true Marine style. He even yelled "OOORAH!"

Less than 15 minutes after stepping off a cushy Washington-based Lear Jet at the Corps' New River Air Station here, Perry was at the helm of a 38-foot Riverene Assault Craft, dressed in a cammie uniform and Gore-Tex foul weather gear, throttling the gunboat's twin 300-horsepower engines to the delight of the enlisted crew.

As two Cobra helicopter gunships thumped overhead in the early morning sky, Perry and the Marines sliced their way down the New River at speeds of 45 mph, spinning, splashing and doing the things Marines do: getting wet and dirty and loving every minute of it.

Meeting and greeting

Perry was at Lejeune at the invitation of Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Harold G. Overstreet. The Corps' top enlisted leader wanted the secretary to meet and greet enlisted members of the Second Marine Division and witness their capabilities.

In the past year Perry has paid similar visits to Army and Navy bases, and plans to visit Air Force and Coast Guard units next. For the secretary, getting out of the Pentagon and into the field has become a favorite pastime.

"Aside from all the philosophy, this is a hell of a lot of fun for me," Perry said after his exhilarating boat ride. "This is the best day of the quarter for me."

In his whirlwind tour of Camp Lejeune, Perry got to ride in everything from light armored vehicles and amphibious assault craft to Humvees and UH-1N Huey helicopters. Along the way, he also got to talk with Marines like SSgt. Keith Ford, a bulk fuel specialist with the 8th Engineer Support Battalion.

Ford and his Marines had been up since 0330 setting up an elaborate display on Onslow Beach that showed

how Marines get fuel from ships to shore. The staff sergeant said he was happy Perry's visit wasn't just another "dog and pony show."

"He just wasn't down here to look around. He was interested," even down to details like the durability of fuel bladders, Ford said. "Once you get a chance to show what you do, it's inspiring. I'll be able to tell my Marines that their effort was worth it."

Enlisting advisors

Months after being appointed defense secretary, Perry organized an advisory panel that included the service's top enlisted leaders. He soon began to rely on that panel, much as he does on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Many of Perry's quality of life initiatives have been a direct result of meeting with enlisted leaders and the troops. People like Overstreet and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Hagan offer invaluable advice, Perry said, especially on personnel issues that directly affect their charges.

Hagan said the feeling was mutual.

"When the Marines here see that their sergeant major has a direct access to the secretary of defense, and it's not something that is on paper, the words spread throughout the force," said Hagan, who joined the other enlisted service chiefs in accompanying Perry to Lejeune.

Unlike other VIP visits, Perry's was an entirely enlisted show. Except for a briefing given by a Marine Harrier pilot, all the briefers who spoke to Perry wore chevrons on their uniforms, not stars or bars.

"You'll notice we shook hands with a general when we got off the plane and shook hands with one when we got back on the plane, and that's the last we saw of them," Perry said. "This whole operation was run by the enlisted. That's by design. That's the way I wanted it done."

Sgt. Maj. Dossey Felts, the 2nd Marine Division Sergeant Major, said his Marines were proud to get the call to tell the Corps' story.

"They were all a little nervous," Felts said. "But most look at it as an awesome opportunity and privilege to meet and brief the secretary of defense."

'Pretty cool'

And not just senior staff sergeants and gunnys were tapped to tell their tales. It was also young, junior enlist-

ed Marines like LCpl. Jackie Daniels of the 2nd Landing Support Battalion.

Daniels showed Perry improvements the Corps had made in tracking and accounting for equipment that comes ashore from pre-positioned ships at sea, using a hand-held scanning device that he waved over a barcode on the bumper of a five-ton truck. Perry seemed impressed with the new tracking technology; Daniels was impressed with Perry's easygoing yet respectful attitude with the troops. The secretary seemed genuinely interested in learning what the Marines did, and how their lives were going. His admiration for them was vocal, and it had an impact as they reflected on his presence.

"It was pretty cool to meet him," Daniels said.

Later on, Cpl. Sean Manley explained a reverse osmosis water purification machine to Perry. During the briefing, Perry told the young Marine he had seen similar machines in action during relief efforts in Rwanda.

"Don't ever minimize what you do here," Perry told Manley. "It's too important."

"He was real interested. He knows what's going on, and I like that," Manley said later. "When he's sitting in his office in Washington, he'll know what we can and can't do out here."

Sgt. Maj. Ron Chamberlain of Marine Forces Atlantic said the Corps wanted Perry to see more than just tanks and riflemen.

"We're not all trigger-pullers. We have some high-tech jobs that are all designed to keep that infantryman on the front line," Chamberlain said. "Each one is proud of what they do. It's important that they tell their story."

Both sides benefit

On his flight back to Washington, Perry said he realized that visits like these can be taxing on the troops, which might take up to two days to prepare for a two-minute secretarial stopover. He wanted the Marines to know he appreciated their hard work, and that he benefited from his visit.

"I hope that there's some benefit to the troops out there, too," he said, "seeing that their senior enlisted personnel — and their leadership in the Pentagon — care about and knows about what they're doing."